

# SPORT

## 'Management gets praise, I get the blame'

SPORTS REPORTER from Bloemfontein

Mushfiqur Rahim's face told the story. No one else feels losses more than the skipper, and he seemed to be feeling the pain of the innings and 254-run loss more than the after-effects of the sickening blow he suffered to the left side of his head while batting on the third day of the second Test. He was especially downcast yesterday, perhaps because along with the debilitating loss, there were questions about his captaincy future as well as murmurs about discontent in the dressing room. There was a lot to answer, not least their heaviest loss of an already dismal record against South Africa.

"After I got hit, there was a lot of pain. I took medication and I tried to be there for my team. After I had a chat with our physio in the middle, I told him I will go off if I can't bat after 10-15 minutes," he said about his injury. "I wasn't 100 per cent but I tried my level best to survive till lunch. I got out before lunch, and then I went to hospital. Doctors did few tests. I am okay at the moment. If I feel bad again, I can go back to the hospital."

In his comments, Mushfiqur had the air of a man holding back his emotions and striving to say the right things when asked about his captaincy and the situation in the dressing room.

"It is up to the board, they gave me the honour and opportunity," said Mushfiqur when asked about the future of his captaincy, in light of reports that the board were thinking of the axe. "I tried my level best with honesty. If they are not satisfied they will take their decision."

Mushfiqur caused a minor stir on the first day when he said after play that his decision to spend time in the deep and not guide his bowlers was dictated by the team management and the coaches, who felt that he was not a good fielder. This has reportedly irked some Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) high-ups. "I haven't heard anything from them. I spoke the truth and if it hurt someone, I have to say sorry. I don't want to be the reason for the team's bad result. I always tried to inspire the team, and lead from the front. I am also a human being, and I am bound to make mistakes," he said.

The clearest evidence of his discontent came when asked about the relationship with coach Chandika Hathurusingha. "It is better to ask him because I am always trying my level best. The team management also try to do their best. I think when the team does really well, all the credit goes to the management and when we are not doing really well all the blame comes to the captain."

"The blame is coming at me, because I decided to field first in both Tests. Maybe I haven't been leading properly and that's why the team isn't doing well. This is why I am saying that I should be given the opportunity to correct my mistakes," said Mushfiqur.

A South African journalist asked if he would resign. "Why should I? It is not an individual's game. It is a team game. Obviously all the blame comes to me being the captain. The board will decide about me, since there's a lot of time before the next Test series."

"It is not about what I want. I can't decide to stay as captain, neither can I leave it. The board has to take the decision and I am sure they will take a good one for the team. Country comes first, not the individual."



**ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST:** Bangladesh batsman Liton Das leaves the field with his head bowed as the South African players celebrate yet another cheap dismissal during the third day of the second Test, which the hosts won by an innings and 254 runs in Bloemfontein yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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BD-SA SCOREBOARD				
<b>SOUTH AFRICA:</b> First innings 573 for 4 declared.				
<b>BANGLADESH:</b> First innings 147 (Imrul 26, Liton 70; Rabada 5-33, Olivier 3-40)				
<b>BANGLADESH:</b> Second innings R/B 45/65 (overnight 7 for no loss)				
Imrul	De Kock	Olivier	32/53	5/1
Soumya	c Du Plessis	b Rabada	3/8	0/0
Mominul	c Maharaj	b Rabada	11/13	1/0
Mushfiqur	lbw b Parnell		26/45	3/0
Mahmudullah	c Elgar			
b Rabada			43/59	7/1
Liton	b Phehlukwayo		18/25	4/0
Sabbir	c Du Plessis			
b Phehlukwayo			4/12	1/0
Tajjul	b Rabada		2/9	0/0
Rubel	b Rabada		7/8	1/0
Subhashis	not out		12/10	3/0
Mustafizur	b Phehlukwayo		7/15	0/1
Extras: (lb-6, nb-1)			7	
Total: (All out in 42.4 overs)			172	
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-29, 3-63, 4-92, 5-135, 6-139, 7-145, 8-145, 9-156, 10-172.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Rabada	11	1	30	5
Olivier	11	1	39	1
Maharaj	6	1	30	0
Parnell	5	0	31	1
Phehlukwayo	9.4	2	36	3
<b>Result:</b> South Africa won by an innings and 254 runs and clinched the two-match 2-0.				
<b>Player-of-the-match:</b> Kagiso Rabada.				
<b>Player-of-the-series:</b> Dean Elgar				

## Why fault only Mushfiqur?

SAKEB SUBHAN from Bloemfontein



The Australians make it a point to target visiting captains, because with the captain taken out the ship becomes rudderless. On the current tour of South Africa, however, it seems that the Bangladesh captain has been targeted not by the opposition, but from within. While there was little chance that Bangladesh would draw or win the just-concluded Test series, internal politicking has created a poisoned atmosphere that seems to have manifested in an utter lack of will to fight -- because the captain has been taken out.

Reports have emerged that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are thinking of sacking Mushfiqur, but as is often the case with the BCB, they may be trying to save face because it has been learnt that Mushfiqur was himself on the verge of waving the poisoned chalice goodbye, not just on this tour but for a while now. That is lent further support by the fact that there is no ready alternative to Mushfiqur -- Shakib Al Hasan's Test commitment is uncertain, Mahmudullah Riyad's Test place is uncertain and Tamim Iqbal has said before that he is not interested in the captaincy.

Whether it was a sacking or a resignation that was looming for the time being it has been deferred as Mushfiqur seemed to be towing the company line after the innings and 254-run loss against South Africa.

There is precedence for Mushfiqur taking such a step, he had announced his resignation after the ODI series loss on the tour of Zimbabwe in 2013. But by his own words, Mushfiqur's discontent this time is not about team performance but about the lack of respect from those who are supposed to be his partners in the dressing room.

It does not take a detective to know that Mushfiqur is facing pressure from the coaching staff to the extent that no serving captain should have to face. After the first day of the second Test in Bloemfontein on Friday, he made it a point to come out to answer questions -- although captains do not

usually do that on the first day -- and seemed to be waiting for someone to ask the question of why he was fielding in the deep for large parts of the day instead of in the infield where he could guide his wayward bowlers.

"The coaches wanted me to field in the deep because they feel I give away runs or drop catches in the infield. I tried to abide by their instructions. You have to do what the team management tells you to do," he said pointedly.

While the knee-jerk reaction would be to ask why a captain would be cowed by a mere coach's instructions when leading his troops on the field of battle, that ignores the authoritarian manner with which head coach Chandika Hathurusingha has been running operations behind the scenes. No less a man than Mashrafe lost the will to fight against the barrage of reminders of his age and exited T20



**It would be grossly unjust to lay the blame squarely on Mushfiqur Rahim for the debacle in the South Africa Test series as it is believed that coach Chandika Hathurusingha pulls a lot of strings when it comes to making crucial decisions.**

PHOTO: STAR FILE

cricket in Sri Lanka earlier this year.

While Mushfiqur is in no way a great captain -- his field placings and lack of involvement are at times astonishing -- but it should never have come to this. An international captain, no matter how good or bad, should never have to hear from coaches that he should not be in the infield leading his side, or anything approaching that suggestion. A team should never have to see their captain being treated thus.

Even if Bangladesh's cricket is not developed to the highest standard, players like Mashrafe and Mushfiqur have done a fair sight more than Hathurusingha can ever do for the country as a coach, but in his authoritarianism he has displayed disrespect for the cricketing culture he works in. It was Mashrafe on the field when Bangladesh progressed to the quarterfinals of the 2015 World Cup, when they won series over India, Pakistan and South Africa. It was Mushfiqur, and not Hathurusingha, who insisted on spinning wickets in Chittagong and Dhaka that delivered a historic Test win over England and a drawn series in 2016. That was also the blueprint that delivered the drawn series against Australia before this tour.

Hathurusingha, however, is a mere man. As an institution, the BCB have given Hathurusingha full freedom to do as he pleases with the team but has not empowered captains like Mushfiqur and Mashrafe to have their say and be heard. Even though Hathurusingha does not stick around in the country between international assignments to look at the domestic talent, he is part of the selection process whereas the captain only has a 'representative' in the process. And if Hathurusingha is given full freedom, why is he not held fully responsible and accountable when results like yesterday's happen.

As an outsider, maybe Hathurusingha's condescension can be understood, but the BCB's complicity shows a lack of respect for the cricketing culture they profess to serve that is altogether more damning.

**PERFORMER OF THE DAY**  
**KAGISO RABADA**

Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada has been phenomenal for South Africa and the right-arm pacer showed no signs of slowing down as he picked up the third 10-wicket haul of his 22-Test career, becoming the fifth-youngest to 100 Test wickets. He also went past 50 wickets for the calendar year. He bowled short deliveries with great effect and bagged successive fifters to wrap up the Tigers for just 172 runs in their second innings and finished with figures of 5-30 to hand the visitors a comprehensive innings and 254-run demolition. Rabada's 10 for 63 over the match is the second most economical 10-wicket haul after Dale Steyn's 11 for 60 among the South African bowlers.

## 'I expected a bigger fight'

SPORTS REPORTER from Bloemfontein



If confidence was to be gained then South Africa have definitely taken the lion's share while on the other hand Bangladesh will be desperately looking to overcome the damage sustained during their demolition in the two-match Test series.

Bangladesh were brutally crushed in both the Tests as the Tigers were unable to put up any sort of fight in any department of the game.

According to Proteas skipper Faf du Plessis, Bangladesh lacked firepower and added that, before the series began, he expected to face a bigger battle.

"Before the series started I said this would be a great challenge for them (Bangladesh) to see where they are when it comes to playing overseas. The last year or two you could see they were a high quality Test team."

"So I expected a bigger fight. I didn't expect them to win the series, but I expected there would be sessions in the game where we would have to be absorbing a bit of pressure because they do have skill. But with that, you have to just say that our team did it better," said Faf du Plessis to the media after an emphatic innings and 254 run win over Bangladesh in the second Test in Bloemfontein yesterday.

The 33-year-old said that Bangladesh does not have the tall fast bowlers needed to get the bounce and pace from traditional African pitches while he also afforded some advice to the Bangladeshi batters to get rid of their fear of short balls.

"You look at the two different styles of teams. Bangladesh don't have tall bowlers. In these conditions you need bowlers who are a bit taller and who can get a bit more bounce. Bounce and pace is what you need when you go to South Africa or Australia. Then there's control. That was lacking from Bangladesh in this series. As a batting unit, we felt that every over there was a boundary you could score, so control is very important. The batters, it's simple but it's hard because the bounce is uncomfortable. You have to get rid of the fear of the short ball and once you have a good plan on how to counter that then you will get better," he opined.

## Decisive final day awaits

SPORTS REPORTER



One can expect the fourth and final day of the fourth round of the 19th National Cricket League to be teeming with excitement as the third day saw all the teams go on attack mode across the country as they pushed for results yesterday.

In the Tier-1 fixture at the Shahid Kamruzzaman stadium in Rajshahi, Rangpur played some attacking cricket and declared the first innings on 317 for 9 in 80.4 overs and took an innings lead of 99 runs after Khulna were bundled out on 218.

Rangpur opener Jahid Javed, playing his fourth first class match, struck his maiden ton and scored 115 off 217 balls which featured 17 fours and two sixes. His partner Saymon Ahmed added another 32 while wicket-keeper batsman Dhiman Ghosh scored a quick 69 off 68 balls including 12 fours.

Khulna's Ziaur Rahman picked up three wickets while Abdur Razzak and Mahedi Hasan took two each before their side, on their second innings, ended the day on 22 without loss trailing by 77 runs.

Meanwhile at the Sheikh Abu Naser stadium in Khulna, Barisal took a first innings lead over Dhaka Division in their Tier-1 encounter. Barisal were all-out on 299 after resuming the day on 201-6.

Overnight batsman Shamsul Islam scored a fifty and Nuruzzaman added 68 to help Barisal take the innings lead while Shuvagata Hom scalped four wickets for Dhaka Division.

However, Dhaka Division replied well during their second innings and will resume the on the fourth day on 110 for 3, leading by 61 runs and Rakibul Hasan at the crease with 39 runs.

Elsewhere during the Tier-2 match at the Shaheed Chandu stadium in Bogra between Rajshahi and Sylhet, Mizanur Rahman smashed his fifth first class hundred as Rajshahi took a first innings lead where the opening batsman scored 143 runs off 169 balls featuring 24 fours and a six.

Rajshahi's Zunaid Siddique scored an unbeaten 82 off 128 balls with ten fours while Farhad Hossain also remained not out on 18. Rajshahi will resume the final day on 279 for 3 and leading by 58 runs after Sylhet were all out on 221.

Lastly, on a once again rain affected day at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium in Chittagong, the hosts struggled on 216-8 and still trail Dhaka Metro by 153 runs in the Tier 2 game.

Chittagong batsman Sazzadul Hague was the highest scorer with 59 runs. Mohammad Ashraful got three wickets while Mohammad Shahid and Nihad Uz Zaman took two each for Dhaka after Chittagong resumed the day on 41 for 1.

## Riaz pegs back Sri Lanka

AFP, Dubai



Paceman Wahab Riaz took three wickets in a fiery spell but Sri Lanka were still in the driving seat after the third day of the second day-night Test in Dubai on Sunday.

Riaz grabbed 3-10 to derail Sri Lanka's second innings -- 34-5 at close -- but the visitors were still in a strong position with an overall lead of 254 runs with five wickets intact.

Riaz dismissed Sri Lankan skipper Dinesh Chandimal leg before for nought in the last over before close to give Pakistan a faint hope of upsetting the tables, but it will be an uphill task for their faltering batsmen to improve in the second innings.

Pakistan were dismissed for 262 in their first innings, conceding a big 220-run lead following Sri Lanka's first innings 482.

It was paceman Mohammad Abbas who started the slide, having opener Kaushal Silva caught behind for three before Riaz dismissed Dimuth Karunaratne for seven and then had debutant Sadeera Samarawickrama out for 13 in a hostile spell of 3.3 overs.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**SRI LANKA:** First innings 482

**PAKISTAN:** First innings 262 all out (Aslam 39, Azhar 59, Sohail 56; Perera 3-72, Herath 3-84)

**SRI LANKA:** Second innings 34 for 5 (Karunaratne 7, Samarawickrama 13, Mendis 8 not out; Abbas 1-6, Shah 1-17, Riaz 3-10)

SCORES IN BRIEF		
<b>BARISAL VS DHAKA DIV</b>	<b>DHAKA METRO:</b> 369 for 9 declared (Mehrab 94, Ashraful 66, Asif 64; Iftekhar 5-91)	<b>RANGPUR:</b> 317 for 9 declared (Jahid 115, Dhiman 69; Ziaur 3-29, Mahedi 2-52) Khulna trails by 77 runs
<b>CHITTAGONG:</b> 216 for 8 in 83 overs (Sazzadul 59, Mahbulul 40; Ashraful 3-49) Chittagong trails by 153 runs	<b>RAJSHAHI VS SYLHET</b>	<b>SYLHET:</b> 221 all-out (Abul 60, Sayem 47; Delwar 4-72, Forhad Reza 3-62)
<b>BARISAL:</b> 299 all-out in 102 overs (Shohag 73, Nuruzzaman 68, Shamsul 56; Shuvagata 4-62) Dhaka lead by 61 runs	<b>KHULNA VS RANGPUR</b>	<b>RAJSHAHI:</b> 279 for 3 in 59 overs (Mizanur 143, Zunaid 82 not out; Imran 2-68) Rajshahi leads by 58 runs
<b>CHITTAGONG VS DHAKA METRO</b>	<b>KHULNA:</b> 218 and 22-0 in 10 overs (Mahedi 14, Robul 7)	